

# WALK AUDIT REPORT – SOUTH CENTRAL COMMONS

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## INTRODUCTION

### **About Healthy Places**

The mission of the Healthy Places program is to enhance healthy and active living. We do this through the policies and practices that impact how we build the places we live, work and play. These "Healthy Places" make it easier to be more active as part of everyday life.

The Healthy Places program works to create a built environment that encourages walkability, bikeability and physical activity through community design processes such as land use and transportation planning. The built environment includes the physical elements added to the natural environment to create our community, like our buildings, road systems, parks, neighborhoods, civic buildings, and schools.

### **About Walk Audits**

A Walk Audit (also called a walk study or walkability assessment) looks at the streets, sidewalks, and physical activity spaces in your neighborhood to find the best walking route. Things like where you feel safest walking and where people like walking the most help plan the route. This information is then used to create a walking map of the area for residents and visitors.

Walk Audits are conducted with residents of the neighborhood or employees of a local business interested in improving the walkability of their community. The Walking Programs Manager from Columbus Public Health leads the Walk Audit, which can take between 1-2 hours to complete.

Walk Audits are also an important way to share community concerns about neighborhood conditions with City of Columbus, area leaders, and other community members.

### **How Walk Audits Are Used**

The Healthy Places Program uses a Walk Audit Tool and Survey to assess the design of Columbus neighborhoods for walking and being active. Walk Audit Reports are posted online and shared with staff from the City of Columbus Departments of Development, Recreation & Parks, Public Safety, and Public Service.

Neighborhood residents can use the contents of these reports, as well as the guidance contained in the Resident's Guide to Neighborhood Traffic Issues (found online at [www.columbus.gov/CAPS-guide](http://www.columbus.gov/CAPS-guide)) to advocate for improvements to the built environment in their area. While some issues like sidewalk condition are often the responsibility of local property owners, there are many things that the City of Columbus can assist with in improving walkability in our communities, but active and engaged residents are critical to ensuring that the most important issues are brought to the attention of the appropriate departments and properly addressed.

# NEIGHBORHOOD WALK AUDIT

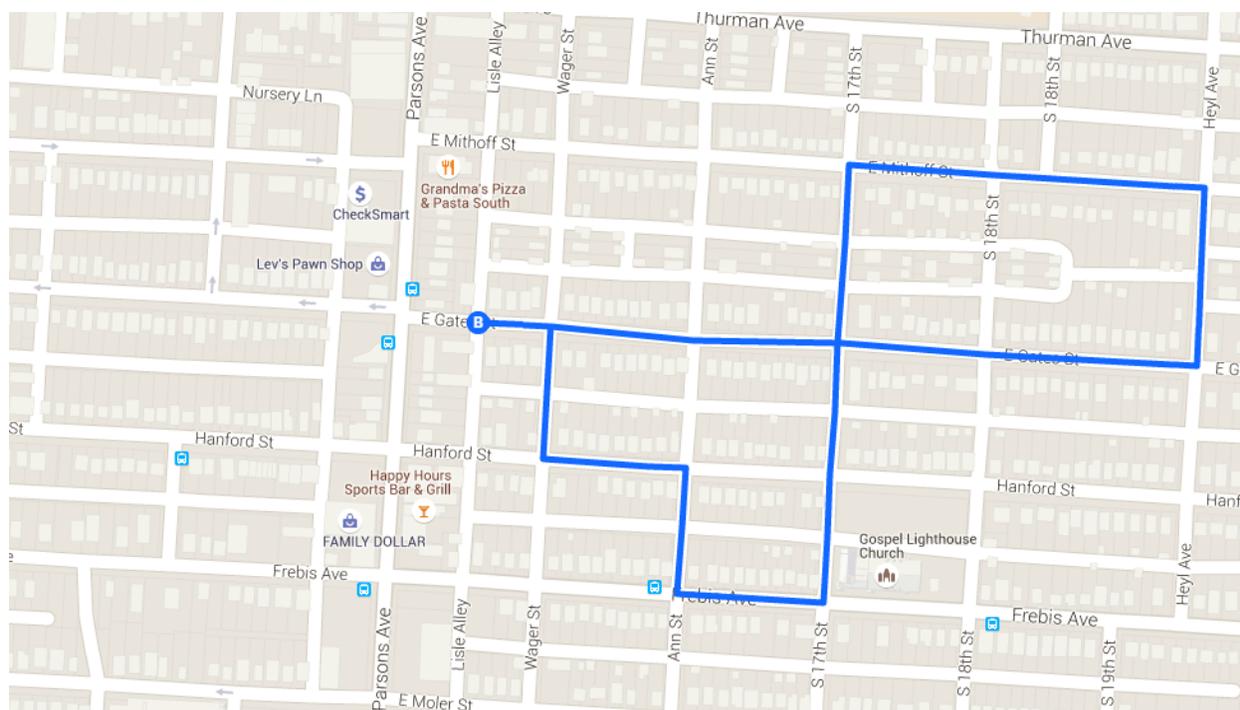
**Date:** 6/26/2016

**Number of Participants:** 8

**Details:** The audit covered one mile of the South Central Commons Neighborhood Pride area. The walk audit began at the corner of Gates St and Lisle Alley, and looped through the neighborhood to audit a variety of streets.



## Audit Route



# WALK AUDIT RESULTS

Walk Score ([www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com))



## Very Walkable

Most errands can be accomplished on foot.

The online tool Walk Score provides ratings of walkability that are based on closeness to nearby destinations. The system calculates walking routes to various destinations, giving maximum points to destinations that can be reached within 5 minutes, decreasing scores for destinations further away, and giving no points for destinations outside of a 30 minute walk. Factors such as population density, block length, and intersection density are also included to provide a rating of pedestrian friendliness.

South Central Commons receives a Walk Score rating of 76 on a scale of 0 to 100, meaning that it is very walkable. Because this rating is calculated based on proximity to destinations, it does not actually reflect the “comfortability” of walking in the neighborhood, only what resources residents can access by walking. The walkability of the neighborhood for recreation is addressed more specifically in the walk audit.

### Walking Assets – Summary

- Compact grid street network provides good connectivity and alternative route options
- Most east-west streets include sidewalks
- The community garden on Hanford is a beautiful part of the neighborhood
- Some corners have received new curb ramps to improve accessibility
- Many homes have well-kept yards and trees that provide shade

### Walking Challenges – Summary

- North-south streets lack sidewalks, have poor drainage, and cars travel too fast
- Overgrown vegetation in some areas, especially Frebis Ave
- Vacant homes can harbor crime or add to blight in the neighborhood
- Drug paraphernalia left on sidewalks along some streets
- No sidewalks on 17<sup>th</sup> Street, the main walking route for students going to South High School and Lincoln Park Elementary School
- Sidewalks are often broken, pushed up by roots, or are too narrow
- Sidewalks suddenly end on some streets
- Steel factory is an unpleasant industrial use in the neighborhood, and blocks through streets, limiting accessibility
- Chain link fencing makes yards seem unwelcoming

### Sidewalk Inventory – South Central Commons Neighborhood Pride Area

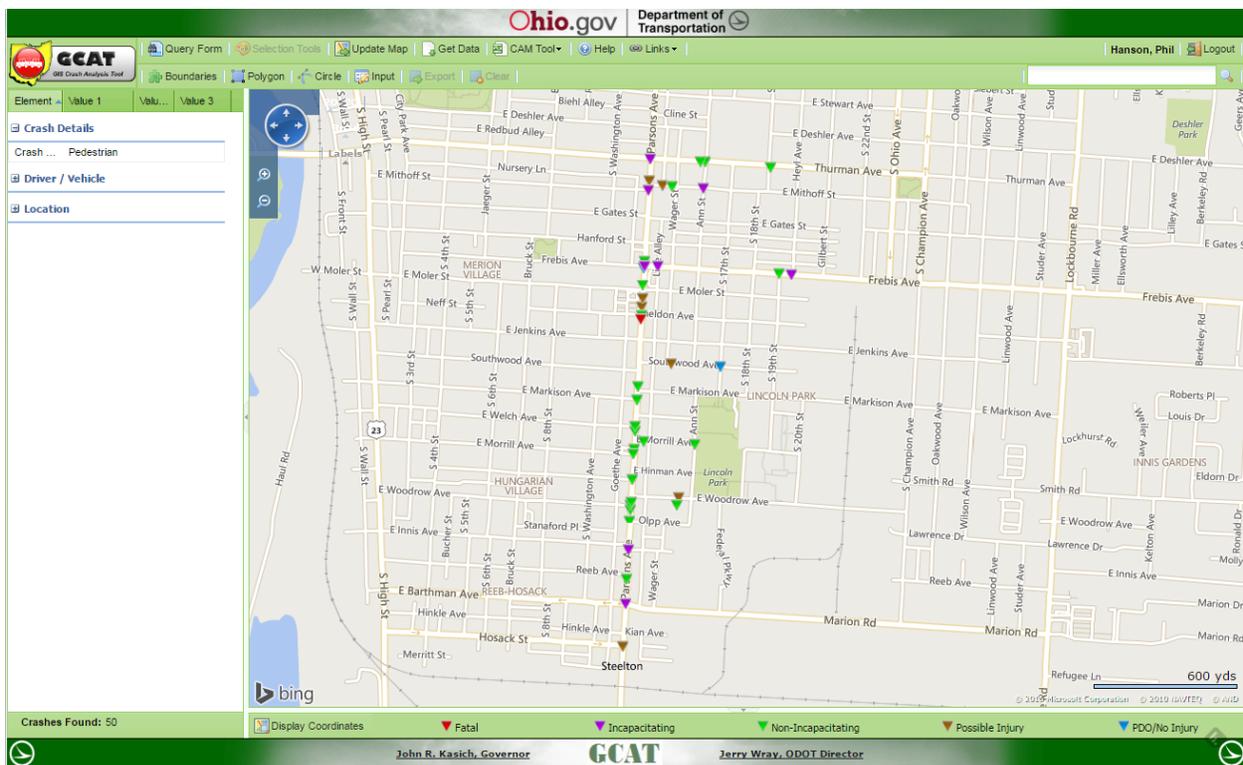
	Length	Percent of Total
<b>Sidewalk on both sides</b>	5.86 mi	60.5%
<b>Sidewalk on only one side of street</b>	0.67 mi	6.9%
<b>No sidewalk</b>	2.22 mi	22.9%
<b>Total roadway length</b>	9.68 mi	100%

Nearly 23% of streets within the South Central Commons Pride area lack sidewalks and 7% have sidewalk on only one side of the street. Walking through the neighborhood reveals that the areas without sidewalk and with sidewalk only on one side greatly impede walkability through the neighborhood.

Most north-south streets do not have sidewalks, with the exception of Parsons Avenue, which is a high traffic corridor and is not a comfortable street for pedestrians to walk along. Many east-west streets have incomplete sidewalks, or they are not continuous through the neighborhood, as they dead-end into various industrial or institutional uses. Connectivity in the neighborhood could be greatly improved by constructing sidewalk along some of the north-south streets currently missing sidewalk.

### Pedestrian Crashes 2011-2016

Using the Ohio Department of Transportation GIS Crash Analysis Tool (GCAT) (located at <http://gcat.dot.state.oh.us/CrashWebHome.aspx>), all pedestrian-involved crashes in South Central Commons were reviewed for available data 2011-2016. Over that time, there were 50 pedestrian crashes reported, including one fatality and nine incapacitating injuries.



The one fatal crash occurred along Parsons Avenue, where the posted speed limit is 25 miles per hour. The incapacitating injury crashes occurred mainly along Parsons Avenue, Frebis Avenue, and E Mithoff St, which all have posted speeds of 25 miles per hour.

While the vast majority of crashes occurred along Parsons Avenue, many were on neighborhood streets as well. This is especially concerning in the area around Lincoln Park Elementary School and the Barack Community Recreation Center, as well as near South High School.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Requests to 311

The City of Columbus' 311 system allows residents to submit requests for City Services through a single point of contact. The system is available Monday to Friday 7 AM – 6 PM by phone at (614) 645-3111, or online at [311.columbus.gov](http://311.columbus.gov)

A number of the issues with walkability in a neighborhood can be reported to 311 for investigation and response by the City. For the South Central Commons neighborhood, the particular issues best served by reporting to 311 are below:

- Requesting new sidewalks and/or curb ramps
- Sidewalks that need repaired
- Crosswalks needed at intersections or mid-block
- Clearing of brush and overgrowth along pathways
- Vacant homes and other buildings/structures in disrepair,
- Suspected criminal activity including drug use/dealing and prostitution
- Speeding in residential areas or school zones

Reporting of an issue to 311 is not a guarantee it will be addressed in the manner requested, but it will ensure that the issue is reported to the appropriate personnel and reviewed. The resolution of a 311 request can be viewed online after it is reported.

### Requests to Area Commission

For issues not resolved by reports to 311, requests can be made to the local area commission. The area commissions are intended to serve as a liaison between the neighborhood residents and developers or city officials. Commission meetings are held regularly and are open to the public.

Area Commissions serve a role in community planning and allocating funding from the City. The Urban Infrastructure Recovery Fund (UIRF) engages Area Commissions to identify and address capital improvement needs in Columbus' central neighborhoods. Projects are currently planned for the cycle from 2015-2019, but engagement with the Area Commission can impact project prioritization and future planning efforts.

The Columbus South Side Area Commission serves the South Central Commons neighborhood. Meetings of the commission are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Parsons Avenue Branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library, located at 1113 Parsons Avenue. The South Side Neighborhood Liaison to the City of Columbus is Jo Anne St. Clair, who can be reached at 614-645-8097.

### Requests to the Transportation and Pedestrian Commission

If an issue related to traffic or pedestrian safety cannot be resolved by reporting it to 311, or by bringing it before the local area commission, it can be brought to the Columbus Transportation and Pedestrian Commission (TPC). The TPC is an official advisory body to the director of public service and Columbus city council. They address matters related to: transportation; bicycle and pedestrian safety; parking and stop-sign, traffic control, and speed-limit policies.

Meetings are open to the public and typically held the second Tuesday of every month at 5:00PM in the Beacon Building, 50 W. Gay Street, Ground Floor, Conference Room B. Meeting agendas and past minutes can be found at <https://www.columbus.gov/TPC/>

## AUDIT PHOTOS

### Sidewalks



Sidewalks in South Central Commons have a variety of issues that need to be addressed, including areas that are overgrown with vegetation, cracked and broken sidewalks, and sidewalks that end suddenly. Many north-south streets do not have sidewalks. Efforts to install new curb ramps and other improvements are hampered by the lack of a complete sidewalk network, and the general disrepair of existing sidewalks.



## Safety



Where sidewalks do not exist, particularly on north-south streets in the neighborhood, there are safety concerns for pedestrians who walk along those streets. Parked cars often make it more difficult to stay along the side of the road, and traffic speeds are high. There is little space available to install sidewalks on many of these streets, so creating safe alternatives and educating residents about safe walking (on the left side of the street when not on a sidewalk) will help to improve conditions. Vacant homes are scattered around the neighborhood and create additional concerns about safety.



## Community and Recreation



The Commons Community Garden is a wonderful asset to the community, and provides a beautiful green space and garden that is shared by the entire neighborhood.